

## Town centre in the spotlight

Retail strategy experts Lorraine Nicholson and Chris Wilkinson are heading to Ashburton next week and they're keen to talk – in cafes, laundromats and butcher shops, as well as in workshops they're organising to help reinvigorate the town centre.

Lorraine and Chris run First Retail Group, which has been commissioned by Council to do a study of Ashburton's town centre. The pair have a deep understanding of the opportunities and challenges of provincial economies, with successful projects delivered in Invercargill, Cambridge, Gore, Nelson and Masterton.

They will be immersing themselves in Ashburton from Monday 2 March, and spending a week engaging with local business owners and customers.

Council Group Manager of Development and Compliance Ian Hyde said Council was organising two workshops on Tuesday 3 March and inviting business people to come along and share their ideas and aspirations.

"We know that day-time meetings don't suit everyone, so that is why Lorraine and Chris are here all week, happy to meet one-on-one, or with groups, and informally making contact with people as they get to know our town."

Chris said Ashburton's recently revamped CBD was a beautiful canvas for the commercial community.

"We want to talk about goodwill, spending habits, and helping businesses and the town centre adapt to changing audiences. People move for a better way of life, there's a wider range of ethnic backgrounds and an ageing population. Businesses need to



*Lorraine Nicholson and Chris Wilkinson will be in Ashburton next week, to engage with locals on how to raise the profile of the central business district.*

be relevant to those changing audiences.

"If you see us about town next week, please stop and chat. We're up for 6am coffee or a catch-up at 7pm after the last appointment."

Chris and Lorraine have retail and property backgrounds, and understand what drives consumers.

"A strong commercial community that works cohesively and collaboratively can stop spending escaping to other towns and cities.

"We want people to take a second look

at Ashburton and refocus on getting that spending back into the local economy. Residents should feel proud of what Ashburton has to offer.

"We'll come up with ideas that can be delivered by the commercial community within their existing budgets, so it's not about creating new costs but leveraging the strengths already there."

Council has set aside \$50,000 for a project to re-energise the CBD, and the investigation and recommendations by First Retail Group will be in a report expected in June this year.

### Mayor Liz McMillan

## Building our solid game plan

**Our Annual Plan discussions will continue into the next fortnight and we expect to have a draft plan ready by 11 March.**

We gave staff direction last week on a number of budget items – including axing \$100,000 spending on a new track and seat at Ashton Beach, and new flags and hardware for the streetlights in Ashburton.

We also talked about Lake Hood, and Councillors accepted the need for a lake manager to start work on the complex suite of resource consents that will need renewing in 2031, and to handle the various projects aimed at improving water quality there.

ACL will continue its job doing the day-to-day lake operations, including operating the weed harvester and monitoring lake levels as per our resource consents. It is really important

we gather as much information about the health of the lake, and look at practical solutions to problems like cyanobacteria, before we make serious decisions about its long-term future.

The draft budget for 2026-27 will also include \$20 million to put towards the second Ashburton Bridge project. Construction should be under way by the end of March and we've taken the opportunity to add in a new watermain that will run from Chalmers Avenue across the bridge and all the way alongside the new connecting road to Grahams Road. The new watermain will add more resilience for the Tinwald water supply.

On 11 March, Councillors will discuss how they will consult with the community about the draft Annual Plan, so we'll keep everyone informed.

I also learned a new word last week,

ungulate. It's a hoofed mammal, like goats, deer, tahr and pigs and we have a problem with increasing numbers in the wild in our foothills and high country.

The impact of these wild ungulates was discussed by the Ashburton District Biodiversity Advisory Group and some are calling for a national management plan. Council works with the Department of Conservation on planned culls in its areas of responsibility, but it's clear these animals are hurting forest regeneration and farming systems.

On a sunnier note, Ashburton turned on fine weather last Sunday for the over 70 cricketers from Canada and England and it was great to see spectators on the sideline admiring their skills. England is back this Sunday to take on New Zealand, so come along and watch!



## SHORT AND SWEET

### HOWZAT!

The Ashburton Domain oval will host an international cricket match this Sunday, between England and New Zealand over-70 cricket teams. The match is part of an international event, bringing together players from all around the globe for a celebration of skill, camaraderie and life-long passion for cricket. The game is free to watch and starts at 10am, so grab a camp chair and a viewing spot on the boundary.

### MT SOMERS DOMAIN CAMPGROUND

Council has received 73 submissions about the Mt Somers Reserve Board's proposed changes to the domain campground, as well as an online petition. A summary of the feedback was presented to the reserve board this week and Council is helping them work through the different issues raised.

### LAKE HOOD

The latest cyanobacteria sampling result from Lake Hood has returned a reading of 0.3mm<sup>3</sup>/L. The sample was taken from the water ski area on 12 February. Two consecutive results below 0.5 are needed before Health New Zealand will consider lifting the public health warning. Trials of products to reduce cyanobacteria are continuing and updates are available on our Lake Hood webpage.

### GRANTS OPEN

Is your community group planning a big project and could do with a financial boost? Council's annual community grants open on 1 March, with nine categories - from biodiversity to events. Check out our website for more details, ashburtondc.govt.nz/grants

### GREENSTREET, RAKAIA HALLS

Two more boards are having their triennial meetings in the next few weeks. The **Ashburton Forks-Greenstreet Reserve Board** will hold its meeting at the Greenstreet hall on 2 March, at 7pm. The **Rakaia Memorial Hall Board** will hold its meeting on 10 March, 7.30pm in the hall's supper room. All are welcome at these triennial meetings!

# Business awards bring bling

The judging panel for the 2026 ANZ Business of the Year Awards had high praise for the standard of entries received this year.

Awards judge Chantelle Quinn said the quality of the entries was exceptional and showcased the diverse, creative and resilient businesses in the Ashburton District.

“Hearing from all the entrants about their work and their passion to succeed is inspirational, and their commitment to our wider Mid Canterbury community really shines through.

“Through their entries we have learned a lot about the work, what drives our businesspeople and how they’ve turned their passions into sustainable operations.

“It was exciting to see how previous entrants had grown from earlier years, and we were impressed to learn what first-time entrants are bringing to the community.”

She said the high calibre of entrants made judging difficult, and that the collective efforts of all the businesses together were making an impact in Mid Canterbury.

The panel congratulated all entrants and encouraged businesses to continue entering with the awards.

The supreme winner announced at Friday night’s gala dinner was Greg Donaldson Contracting, which has grown into a large-scale agricultural contracting business using pioneering technology.

The company won the Technology and Innovation category and was highly commended in the Primary Industries and Environmental Sustainability categories. General manager Michael Donaldson was also named Emerging Business Leader.

Mayor Liz McMillan said it was an inspirational night, with the awards



highlighting the incredible talent and drive in the district.

“There are so many success stories happening in our own backyard and they deserve to be recognised and celebrated for their hard work, and determination.”

For more information on all the finalists and winners, visit [businessoftheyear.nz](http://businessoftheyear.nz).

**The gala night included entertainment, and was compered by Luke Howden, pictured with Layla Manning (below). Hemsworth Estate (below right) won the Tourism category.**



**Mayor Liz and ANZ's Jeremy Macavoy with the team from Greg Donaldson Contracting, supreme winners.**



## \$100,000 Lottery grant boosts bike park coffers

Wheels will soon be turning at Mid Canterbury’s new bikew skills park, which has been gifted \$100,000 from Lottery Community Facilities.

Construction of the Tarbotton RideSmart Park is due to begin at the Ashburton Domain in late March and Mayor Liz McMillan said the Lottery funding was well-timed and very much appreciated.

“We heard last week that the application by the Mid Canterbury Community Wellbeing and Safety Enhancement Trust for \$100,000 was successful and that is a tremendous boost.

“The trust has been working in the background to secure funding and sponsors, while Tarbotton Land & Civil is making a big donation of machinery and labour to bring the bike skills park to life.

“We’re thrilled that there’s such energy and support for this project, and that it will

be fully funded by the community.”

Tarbotton RideSmart Park will be built in the domain, near the children’s playground. The existing asphalt pump track will be removed and a new, bigger track built in its place.

The park will feature a network of roads, with stop and give way signs; plus there’ll be traffic lights, a railway crossing and a roundabout – all of which cyclists, scooter riders and pedestrians encounter when moving around Ashburton and other urban centres.

It is designed to teach road safety skills to children, young people and adults as they learn how to ride a bike or scooter and to be a destination for families and district visitors.

Mayor Liz said the Lion Foundation, Mid and South Canterbury Community Trust, Sport Canterbury and local service clubs had also provided funding for the project.

### COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council meetings are held in Hine Paaka, the Council Chamber, unless otherwise stated; agendas are online at [ashburtondc.govt.nz](http://ashburtondc.govt.nz)

Tuesday 3 March, **Council Workshop on Emissions Reduction Scenarios**, 1.30pm

Wednesday 4 March, **Stockwater Transition Working Group**, 1.30pm

Monday 9 March, **Methven Community Board**, (live-streamed), 9am, Mt Hutt Memorial Hall

Wednesday 11 March, **Three Waters Committee**, (live-streamed), 10.30am

Wednesday 11 March, **Annual Plan Workshop**, (live-streamed), 1pm

Wednesday 18 March, **Council Workshop – Bylaws**, 9am

Wednesday 18 March, **Council Meeting (live-streamed)**, 1pm

Wednesday 25 March, **Activity Briefings (live-streamed)**, 9.30am

Tuesday 31 March, **Council Workshop – Arts, Culture & Heritage Strategy**, 1.30pm

### ROADING NOTICES

**Ealing Montalto Road** - Closed between Shepherds Bush Road and Ruapuna School Road until early March while Grant Hood Contracting carries out road maintenance for Council. Detours in place.

**Ealing Montalto Road** - Closed between Baxters Road and Lakes Road until mid March while Grant Hood Contracting carries out road maintenance for Council. Detours in place.

**Fairfield Road** - Closed between Company Road and Singletree Road until 31 March, while Fulton Hogan carries out heavy road maintenance for Council.

**Seafield Road** - Closed from 2 March until 19 April for road maintenance. Traffic management in place.

**Elizabeth Avenue (Rakaia)** - Traffic management in place from Burrowes Road to Tancred Street until late March, while Rooney Earthmoving installs water pipes for Council. Access for residents remains.

**Spaxton Street** - Traffic management in place in parts (from Alford Street to Main Street) until early March while Rooney Earthmoving installs water mains for Council.

**Railway Terrace West** - Closed between Bowen Street and South Town Belt from until Friday 27 March while flow meters are installed on water mains. Resident access remains.

**Catherine Street** - Closed between Ashbury Grove and McMurdo Street until Friday 20 March while new wastewater pipes are installed. The work will include traffic management, trenching and pipe-laying. Resident access will be maintained.

**Moore Street** - Closed at the intersection with William Street from 3-6 March while a contractor installs service connections for a private development.

**SH1 at Longbeach Road intersection (NZTA)** - Road reconstruction until 18 March. Expect speed restrictions and delays of up to 10 minutes. This reconstruction work is weather dependent and may be rescheduled at short notice.

**SH1 Tinwald (NZTA)** - Traffic management in place from 22 February for resurfacing between Carters Terrace and Manchester Street.

Full closure details are on our website

### ROAD CLOSURE

Ashburton District Council gives public notice of temporary road closures to enable the Ashburton Car Club to hold the following community event:

#### UPPER DOWNS SHINGLE SPRINT

Road to be closed:

- **Upper Downs Road, from Quarry Road to Hinds Gorge Road**

Period of closure: **From 8am to 5pm on Saturday 28 February.**

It will be an offence under the Transport (Vehicular Traffic Road Closure) Regulations 1965 for any person otherwise than under authority of an authorised permit to use the roads for ordinary vehicular traffic during the period of closure.

**NEIL McCANN**  
Group Manager Infrastructure

#### COUNCIL OFFICE

2 Baring Square East  
Mon, Tue, Wed & Fri 8.30am-5pm  
Thursday 9am-5pm

#### ASHBURTON LIBRARY

2 Baring Square East, Ashburton 7700  
Mon & Fri 8.30am-6pm, Tue-Thu 8.30am-8pm  
Sat & Sun 10am-4pm

#### EA NETWORKS CENTRE

20 River Terrace  
Mon - Fri 5.45am-9pm (pools 8pm Mon & Tue, 7pm Wed-Fri; gym 8pm). Sat & Sun 7am-7pm (pools 6pm, gym 6pm)

#### ASHBURTON ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

327 West Street  
10am-4pm daily (late night Wed)